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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4862  
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 6601  
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 4658  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3376  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 0308  
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 3463  
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0962  
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE 0296  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2553  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0079  
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI 0160  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 7141  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 4946  
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 0090  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1562  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0505  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 002015

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STATE FOR U/S BURNS, SCA/INS, USPACOM FOR FPA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT TO REVIEW ALL CONTACTS WITH LTTE

REF: A. A. COLOMBO 2010

[1](#)B. B. COLOMBO 2013

Classified By: Ambassador Robert O. Blake, Jr. for reasons  
1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary and Action Request: In the aftermath of the failed assassination attempt of Defense Secretary Rajapakse (ref a), the Government of Sri Lanka announced on December 3 that the Cabinet will decide on December 6 whether to revive the ban on contacts with the LTTE, which would effectively end peace negotiations and lead to all-out war. The Cabinet also will decide whether to allow expatriate staff of international NGOs continued access into LTTE-controlled areas in the North and East. Ambassador contacted all Co-Chair Ambassadors by phone on December 4 since today is a Buddhist holiday and all offices are shut. The Co-Chair Ambassadors agreed to Ambassador's proposal that he use a previously scheduled meeting with the Foreign Minister on December 5 to strongly advise the Government on behalf of the Co-Chairs not to end contacts with the LTTE and not to ban further access by international NGOs into the North and East.

Ambassador recommends that U/S Burns call President Rajapakse on December 4 or 5 to make these same points (see para 5). End Summary.

Decisive Cabinet Meeting

[1](#)2. (U) The head of the GSL Peace Secretariat Palita Kohona announced on December 3 that the Sri Lankan Cabinet of Ministers will meet on December 6 to consider whether to revive the ban on contacts with the LTTE. (Note: this ban was lifted in 2001 in response to the ceasefire. Then-Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe expended considerable political capital to get the ban lifted so peace talks could take place.) Kohona simultaneously announced that he had asked Norwegian Special Envoy Hanssen-Bauer to defer his planned trip to Kilinochchi until after the December 6 Cabinet

meeting.

JVP and JHU Take to Streets in Favor of Ban

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¶3. (U) The hard-line JVP and JHU parties both took to the streets over the weekend to urge the Government to reinstate the ban on contacts with the LTTE. JVP General Secretary Weerawansa called on the Government to ban the LTTE, abolish the Cease-fire Agreement (CFA), and take back all the diplomatic and political advantages extended to the LTTE under the CFA. The JVP also threatened not to vote for the Government's budget if the Government does not reinstate the LTTE ban.

Hanssen-Bauer Waiting for Wednesday Decision

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¶4. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador on December 4, Norwegian Special Envoy Hanssen Bauer confirmed that Kohona had indeed asked him not to travel to Kilinochchi to meet the LTTE until after the Cabinet makes its decision on December 6. Hanssen-Bauer said he would stay in Colombo until at least the end of week (he had been scheduled to leave for Delhi on Thursday night). Kohona also told the Norwegians privately that no expatriate staff of international NGOs would be allowed into the LTTE-controlled areas of the North and East until the Cabinet meeting and that the Cabinet would also decide then whether to maintain this ban at the Wednesday meeting. Ambassador briefed Hanssen-Bauer and Norwegian Ambassador Brattskar that he would use a previously scheduled meeting with Foreign Minister Samaweera on 12/5 to urge strongly that the Government not reinstate the ban on the LTTE and also not ban the travel of expatriate INGO staff

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into the North and East. The Norwegians agreed the Ambassador should speak on behalf of the Co-Chair Ambassadors on these two points. The Japanese, German and EU Ambassadors agreed in subsequent phone conversations.

Comment and Action Request

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¶5. (C) It is significant that the Government elected to wait until Wednesday to schedule a Cabinet meeting on this major issue. Embassy contacts reported there is considerable division within the Cabinet, with the Foreign Minister and other Cabinet members of the GSL peace team arguing against the ban, with other more hard-line elements strongly in favor. Those hard-liners continue to believe (wrongly) that the government has the opportunity to defeat the LTTE militarily. Interestingly, there have been no major military engagements reported since the assassination attempt, possibly because of the tough message President Rajapakse received in Delhi and the message Army Commander Fonseka received in Washington. The decision to wait until Wednesday is constructive as it will allow emotions to cool and suggests the GSL wanted to give the international community an opportunity to weigh in. Ambassador recommends that U/S Burns call President Rajapakse on December 4 or 5 to make the following points:

-- Very sorry to hear that LTTE targeted your brother last Friday. Happy to hear he was not harmed.

-- Ambassador Blake made a very strong statement on television condemning the attack and calling on the LTTE to renounce terrorism and violence and join in negotiating a peaceful settlement.

-- Understand you have scheduled a Cabinet meeting Wednesday to decide whether to renew the ban on contacts with the LTTE. Strongly urge you not to take this momentous step.

-- We do not believe there can be a military solution to this conflict. Ambassador Blake briefed you on my meeting with

General Fonseka. We strongly support your fight against the LTTE. But that support is not unconditional.

-- We think the SLFP-UNP effort to forge a devolution proposal represents a major opportunity to reverse the downward spiral Sri Lanka is now caught in. (Note: Rajapakse is scheduled to meet Ranil Wickremesinghe to discuss the proposal on December 5.)

-- I also understand the Cabinet may consider whether to ban travel by expatriate staff of international NGOs into areas controlled by the LTTE.

-- We and many other countries are deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in these areas. We were pleased that 18 INGOs were cleared recently to resume their activities in these areas. Hope that decision will stand.

-- We strongly urge that the Cabinet not restrict expatriate staff travel or take any other steps that would complicate humanitarian access to these areas.

BLAKE